1815

Lecture for Cadets
D. B. Norton

On

Typhus Fever.

1816

From a consciousness of my incompetency to throw any li
on a medical subject, it is with extreme diffidence and reluctan
that I act in conformity to one of the prescribed laws of the
institution. Vain and impertinent would it be in me a me
tyro in medical acquirements (if otherwise circumstanced) to
advance any thing on a subject which has been handled
men as remarkable for their profound knowledge and endu
as for the superior genius which it has pleased the dispe
of all things to confer upon them. Neither have I the
benefit which accrues from practice and which is so necessa
to give a right idea concerning all diseases, nor has it
been in my power to peruse with proper attention, the au
who have written with most ability concerning the disea
which I have selected for my dissertation. These two cir

requisites for the better performance of my task being deficient I hope will offer ample apology for the manner in which it is executed.

The disease I propose treating of is Typhus fever and my first effort shall be to describe the symptoms 2dly to mention the prognosis 3dly to enumerate the causes and 4thly to give proper directions for the cure of the disease.

Camp, Spotted, Putrid, Hospital, Jail, and Typhus fever are essentially one and the same disease. Typhus may be divided into Gravior and Mitior, the former differing from the latter only in point of violence, requiring a modification of the same treatment; I shall therefore confine my remarks to the Typhus Gravior.

For the most part it makes its appearance gradually

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but we find exceptions to this rule, It is ushered in by an alternate sensation of heat and cold, pains in the head, backs and extremities, considerable prostration of strength and dejection of spirits, the pulse is small, weak, and frequent, the countenance is pale and sunk, accompanied with confusion in the head, loss of appetite and unrefreshing sleep, white tongue moderate thirst, and nausea. As the fever advances there is great dejection of spirits, the pain and confusion of the head is more constant, with great nausea & hesitation the pulse is not sunk but varies much as to strength and fullness, and is little affected by moderate bleeding the patient is sometimes costive, at other times there comes on a Diarrhoea and this variation may be attributed to the different constitutions of the patients; The Skin is

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generally dry and parched, though sweats of unequal duration frequently occur, and these should not be considered as critical, unless they be gentle, equally diffused and supervene towards the decline of the Disease; the tongue is now apt to become dry, furrowed, and of a dark brown or red-chalk colour, and if examined minutely, will be found to partake more or less of a tremulous motion, the thirst still continues moderate. The Disease advancing the breath becomes remarkably offensive, and there is a black fur deposited on the roots of the teeth, In some patients a Delirium does not make its appearance but what may be more properly denominated Stupor, the faculties of the mind, are generally impaired before death and frequently from the commencement of the disease

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this may be produced either by the too early use of stimulants or injudicious bleedings. The Countenance unless Delirium supervenes is significant, the eyes are of a red or yellowish cast Delirium increases as night comes on, and if there previously existed only a Stupor, this is apt to change into Delirium this particular symptom, is induced frequently by copious evacuations, or it may be owing to the progress of the fever. Whether induced by the one or other cause, during slumber the eye lids are half closed, and the patient utters incoherent sentences, with a voice scarcely to be heard; as the pulse sinks the affection will be found to increase and vice versa.

Subsultus tendinum or a starting of the tendons is also a frequent symptom. Petechiæ or small spots resembling the bites of fleas, make their appearance, more particularly

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on the back and breast, they are confluent and will often be overlooked unless we search especially for them, these spots differ from the Exanthematous eruptions, in not rising above the level of the skin; Sir John Pringle says he has observed streaks and blotches of a similar colour.

Though this fever is said to be continued, yet there is often an exacerbation at night and some Diaphoresis and remission during the day, it sometimes assumes the gast of an Intermittent, or takes on the Hectic form, terminating in various times, but more frequently in the lapse of fourteen or twenty one days, and there has been instances of recovery after the fourth week.

{Prognosis. The favourable symptoms are a gentle bilious diarrhoea, softness and moisture of the skin,

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Deafness, little Delirium, the strength little impaired, moist tongue, turbid urine depositing a copious sediment, spontaneous salivation, abatement of stupor and tremor, the pulse rising under the use of Stimulants, abcesses of the parotid glands, the petechiae changing from a livid to a florid colour and mealy eruptions, to which Dr Ferriar adds a mortification of the extremities of the fingers. The Unfavourable Symptoms are, Diarrhoea with a hard belly, profuse sweats Hemorrhagies in the decline of the disease, (and I have observed patients to do well in whom an Epistaxis occurred in the early part of the first stage of the disease, pointing out the propriety of topical bleeding) Gastric affections Starting of the tendons, inflamed and staring eyes, Quick and altered voice, high Delirium & watchfulness

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the disturbance of the head increasing, livid spots, gangrene where blisters have been applied, acute hearing, apathy, bloody or sooty urine, involuntary faces, tremulous motion of the tongue and difficulty of projecting it, coldness of the extremities, impeded deglutition, picking at the bed clothes and efforts to throw them off. — Causes. The predisposing are a weakened constitution produced by other diseases, depressing passions, extreme heat or cold, and warm damp weather. The Remote causes are such as induce Intermittents, marsh miasmata and the effluvia arising from putrid fish, want of nutritious diet, cold alternating with heat, contagion or infection, impure or confined air.

The Disease may be divided into three stages, the first which commences, with a fit somewhat resembling intoxication

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lasts whilst the patient is able to walk about; the second confines him, and there is some confusion of the mind; the third is accompanied with great prostration of strength, sinking pulse and stupor. It is with difficulty that we distinguish the first stage, but the last is strongly marked. ~~~~~~~~ Cure, in the 1st stage of this fever Emetics will be found of infinite service; different practitioners have given preference to different preparations, for instance Dr Fordyce advices the Antimonials, and Dr Duncan Ipecacuanha, this last I would prefer from its being a manageable medicine, whilst on the other hand, the preparations of Antimony are more precarious in their effects; Emetic medicines will be found of most advantage when they purge as well

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as moderately vomit the patient. Nauseating doses may frequently arrest the progress of the fever after the stomach and intestines have been evacuated, and I fancy it is, in this stage of the disease, that the use of the Eupatorium perfoliatum, thorough wort, or ague weed is highly spoken of. Such medicines relieve the head more certainly than bloodletting. It is not however always necessary to commence the cure by Emetics, as the nausea and other gastric affections, may frequently be removed, by means of the effervescing draught or by a weak infusion of mustard. The milder purges will be found to contribute much towards the well doing of the patient, among st these we may mention particularly the Oleum Ricini Rhubarb, and Calomel, or mercury in the form of the

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blue pill. Bleeding which the pulse so frequently indicates in the second stage, is a precarious remedy the drawing of a small quantity of blood, having but a momentary effect on the arterial system, whilst larger bleedings frequently prostrate the system never to rise again, and if we consider the buffy coat exhibited by the drawn blood, to justify the repetition of venesection we shall through its agency inevitably hasten the desolation of our patient. Topical bleeding may be resorted to when the head is much affected and frequently with benefit but I believe that, a gentle vomit will more certainly relieve this symptom (provided circumstances do not contra-indicate). In the third stage which is by far the longest, the pulse is considerably sunk, stupor and petechiæ

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supervening, but this efflorescent eruption, is frequently absent; much depletion is calculated to produce a direct passage from the first to this last stage, when we should have recourse to stimulants in large doses frequently repeated. Volatile Alkali may be first mentioned, this medicine may be given in substance, in doses of 4 or 5 grains every 2 hours, or in the form of Julap to the extent of a Drachm in twenty four hours. Camphor may be given in doses of 5 or 6 grains every 3 hours, in union with water or milk, or in combination with the different barks, as the cortex Peruvianus, Angustura, cascarilla, Cornus florida & Magnolia tripetela, these medicines I would use merely as auxiliaries to the more potent, and in the convalescent stage of Typhus this remark I would also extend to the Aristolochia or

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Serpentaria virginiana whose invigorating power on many occasions, is immense. Musk is an invaluable medicine, provided it be genuine, and will relieve Delirium and subsultus tendinum, and has considerable Diaphoretic action, given in doses of 6 or 7 grains every two hours, it has also the effect of producing the most pleasing and refreshing sleep. Castor is similar in its effects to musk, and we may expect benefit from its use, given to the extent of 15 or 20 grains at a dose; it was the practice of Dr Fordyce to combine with it Opium. Asafoetida* is particularly serviceable, when expectorants are indicated: this often happens in the anomalous forms of the disease, as in Typhus cum pneumonia. Opium, the great objection to this medicine is that when continued for

* This medicine is particularly recommended by Dr Barton.

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any length of time, it is apt to produce profuse diaphoresis tending much to debilitate and exhaust the patient; but in some stages of the disease it is an indispensable medicine, as when a Delirium supervenes not dependant on an inflammation of the meninges of the brain, the medicine then will produce sleep and tranquilise the patient.

Dr Cullen remarks, that in the advanced state of fever there is a circumstance occurring, which we may be aware of as a fact, though we cannot well explain it, he goes on to observe that the cause of fever gives an irritation to the brain, which is not of the inflammatory kind, producing convulsive motions of the limbs to a considerable degree and to this irritation we may impute Delirium and subsultus tendinum; to remove these effects of irritation

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Opium is a sovereign remedy. Sir John Pringle never administered it in Typhus, and it is the opinion of Dr Brown that its unassisted power is able to combat the disease, upon the whole I believe it requires great nicety and judgement in its administration.

Wine is an article of primary importance, in the cure. Of these the soundest Port and Madeira are preferable. A quart or more may be taken during the 24 hours, either in the form of whey or panada, or in combination with aromatics; this last combination, will seldom be found necessary, whey and panada should always be made of the best white wines. In cases of exigency, we may resort to the use of the more powerful drinks, as Rum, Brandy and Porter.

Blisters, have been used in every stage of the disease. Dr Cullen used them indiscriminately; Dr Fordyce thinks

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that they induce subsultus tendinum, especially in females if used during the second and third Stages; they are extremely beneficial in typhus cum pneumonia, and should be used early; they will be found also to relieve Delirium, especially when aggravated by the use of wine. Sinapisms are more useful in the last stage than Blisters, as they do not deplete, their action being gigantic and at the same time lasting. Cantharides. We have the honourable testimony of Dr Home in support of the great benefit to be derived from the tincture of Cantharides, in the cure of typhus; we may use it in doses of 15 or 20 drops repeated three or four times a day. Mercury, given so as to produce a gentle Ptyalism, in the first 2d and 1st part of the 3d stage is a remedy deserving considerable

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attention. The application of cold water to the surface of the body under certain circumstances is highly spoken of by Dr Currie; the may use it when the skin is remarkably dry, by means of aspersion or affusion, thus applied it will relieve in a great measure, the morbid heat of the body, quiet Delirium, and induce sleep. Much has been justly ascribed, to the use of well ventilated apartments in moderating the violence of the disease.

Should it terminate in Hectic fever or take on the intermittent form, our chief reliance should be in the use of barks and arsenic. Diarrhœa which is so frequent an attendant on the disease; when immoderate should be checked, by means of the cretaceous mixture in preference to opium.

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to open them without waiting for a fluctuation, or suppuration of the tumour which probably may not take place at all, owing to the acidity of the enclosed pus.

Amongst external applications, we may mention a mixture of Spirits of turpentine & Tincture of Cantharides. I have witnessed the good effects of this combination applied, generally to the surface of the body, by means of friction; It resuscitated as it were the patient verging on dissolution, and suddenly restored all the functions of the body.

To promote the action of Diaphoretic medicines we find a valuable auxiliary in the use of heated salt confined in bags, and bottles filled with warm water applied to the extremities.

s subjects interesting both

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